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El Salvador: FMLN Demobilization Schedule

To Be Demobilized (percent)	Original Deadline	Revised Deadline
20	1 May	30 June (completed)
40	31 May	21 Sep
60	30 Jul	30 Sep
80	28 Sep	15 Oct
100	31 Oct	31 Oct

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Special Analysis

EL SALVADOR: The FMLN's Political Strategy

FMLN leaders, anxious to do well in elections in 1994, are prolonging demobilization to extract more concessions from the government. Full demobilization is unlikely by the 31 October deadline and may stretch into next year. []

The Constitution requires the FMLN to disarm and demobilize forces before it can participate in elections, one of its key objectives in signing the peace accord. Rebel leaders, however, are delaying compliance in an effort to gain concessions from the government that will strengthen the loyalty of their troops and garner wider voter support. The revised timetable agreed to last month affirms the original goal of total FMLN demobilization by the end of next month, but the government will have difficulty fulfilling its promises on additional land redistribution and police reform, increasing the likelihood that the rebels will continue stalling. []

A Strategy of Delay and Evasion

By demanding additional concessions, FMLN leaders apparently hope to control the tempo of the peace process, to show that they have an equal standing with the government, to ensure benefits for their rank and file, and to maintain a military capability as insurance against government backsliding and rightwing violence. They probably believe their tough stance will shore up support among followers who are concerned about government compliance and skeptical that the FMLN leadership serves their interests. []

FMLN leaders have publicly justified their actions by pointing to the government's failure to provide adequate benefits for ex-rebels, to make timely progress on police reform and land redistribution, and to protect leftist activists. The rebels' apparent strategy is to sustain criticism of the government and to shift to new issues once progress is achieved in any one area. Although some of their complaints are valid, UN mediators consider others to lack merit. []

[] Rebel leaders probably calculate that the government and the UN are willing to tolerate delays and evasions rather than risk a breakdown in the peace process by insisting on strict compliance. []

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Looking Toward the Elections

To participate in general elections in March 1994, FMLN leaders must prove to the UN that they have demobilized their armed forces, but disputes over this are almost inevitable, particularly if rogue guerrilla elements refuse to surrender their arms. Moreover, the FMLN almost certainly will continue to maintain a clandestine force in an effort to guarantee its security. The government might cite such violations as justification for trying to deny the FMLN the right to participate in the elections, but intense international pressure probably would force the government to back down for the sake of national reconciliation.

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